

[Letter from Alan Lomax to Woody Guthrie, January 21, 1942]

January 21, 1942

Mr. Woody Guthrie 430 Sixth Ave. New York City

Dear Woody:

I played the Almanac songs the other day for Mrs. Roosevelt, and she thought they were swell, and asked for copies of the records. She is playing them for her OCD staff, and I think their fame will be spread abroad. Besides, the "News and Special Events" men from BBC was here, and took a copy of "Taking it Easy" with the intention of getting it played on their network. He promised to get in touch with you all and get your permission first.

The other night I played the stuff for Bobby Strauss, who is Director of Information for OEM, and he was delighted and said he thought that the thing should be used on a broadcast with the only live talent. Something, I am sure, will come of that. I told him that you all could make a new song about any assigned subject at the drop of a banjo.

It's very important, I think, for you to hurry up and change your name, and for heavens sake make it a good old countrified name like "Oklahoma Rangers" or something of the sort. Your chief point of contact in America is that of the background of the American soil and American folk songs. Don't become "Headline Singers", even though you may be singing the headlines.

This all leads up to a request from the Library for the use of one of the songs you recorded for us, namely "The Gypsy Davy". We are publishing an album of American ballads for the National Council of Teachers of English. Said album will be used mostly in schools and colleges for teaching purposes, but the individual records will also be available

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for purchase from the Library to members of the general public. Our fee to singers for permission to use their material is a flat \$10.00 per side, which is hereby offered to you with apologies understood. I sincerely believe that this will not compete with your commercial records, even if you decide to record the same song for commercial companies, and I hope you will feel able to tell us to go ahead. If not, I will understand perfectly the reasons why you decided not to.

The bill that your commercial recording company sent us from New York is somewhat of a mystery to me. I can't understand the reason for all the items and have so written them; and I might tell you confidentially that the recording stinks. You ought to make a change in your business. I sure would like to hear the news, but even so, all power to your mighty guitars.

Regards,